

Show-Me

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Understanding Reading Instruction

What Do We Know About Adults' Reading Needs?

Reading opens many doors—to employment, training, higher education, and lifelong learning. Adults who don't read well face serious barriers as they attempt to earn a living wage, to support their children's learning, and to fully participate in civic and community life. They are unable to gain access to a wealth of print information that readers take for granted, and they miss out on the joy of reading for pleasure.

Although we can't say exactly how literate adults need to be, we can say with certainty that most of the parents in family literacy and other basic education programs are seeking higher levels of literacy or English language proficiency to reach their personal, family, and work-related goals. That's why they enroll in adult education programs.

Most adult learners are employed and working hard to support themselves and to care for their families. Many have developed interpersonal and other skills that have enabled them to function as competent, contributing adults in spite of their lack of basic skills. However, they have hopes for the future, and they believe that education will give them options to improve their lives.

These adults know they need help to achieve their educational goals, but are often unaware of what it will take to do so. In particular, they may not

realize the extent to which their reading ability is a barrier to their continued educational progress. Many enroll with the goal of earning a GED certificate, and expect to reach that goal in a matter of weeks or months. For some, a skills brush-up is sufficient, but most will need to do considerably more work than they anticipate. Some learners need to focus only on math or writing, but for others, the problem is more basic. Reading skill deficits affect performance on nearly every part of the GED test battery, because they are written tests. Learners with reading problems must address them before they can hope to meet their goals.

The number of adults with reading problems can be estimated based on national surveys. For instance, in 1992, 46% of adults in the U.S had Level 1 or Level 2 literacy skills, the lowest of five levels defined by the National Adult Literacy Survey (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993). (As this book is going to press, new data on adult literacy are being released by the National Center for Educational Statistics.)

How many of these adults are enrolled in ABE or other basic skills programs? The learner groups that programs serve vary, but the Third National Even Start Evaluation (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) gives us an idea of the literacy skills of adult participants in family literacy. This report shows that 11% of adults in Even Start in 2000-2001 participated in adult basic education services at the 0-4 grade level. According to

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data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Reporting System, in ABE/GED programs, the number of low-level learners is higher. About 21% of adults in 2001-02 entered with reading skills at 3.9 GE or below (Participants by Entering Functioning Level 2001-2002 Aggregate).

Clearly these adults need reading instruction. But what about the others? Is reading instruction important only for beginners?

Research tells us that mid-level readers (often the largest percentage of adult learners) have extremely varied reading needs, and although they have learned some word identification skills, they often don't make good use of these skills when reading. When they come to a word they

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don't recognize, they may use the first few letters and/or context clues to guess rather than decode the word (Davidson & Strucker, 2002). Other learners need to increase fluency, build vocabulary, or improve comprehension.

In other words, although they may not always understand the exact nature of their problems, many adults in basic education programs need to improve their reading. So why don't teachers spend more time on reading?

Challenges in meeting adults' reading needs

In current practice, teachers in many adult education and family literacy classrooms focus on GED preparation and other goal-related instruction.

Of course, many of these adults are not able to read GED-level textbooks or other goal related materials, but in a multi-level classroom, teachers often feel they can't provide the kind of individualized reading instruction that these adults need. Teachers do the best they can to manage small- and largegroup learning activities aimed at what seem to be common needs and rely on workbooks for individualized skills instruction. In the learning lab type of class, adults spend a large portion of their class time working independently on the skills they need, using textbooks or computer-assisted instruction programs, while the teacher circulates to provide help. In some classrooms the teacher is able to provide a volunteer tutor to work one-to-one with a learner who needs extra assistance.

This approach evolved in response to the realities of the setting and the learners. The multi-level classroom is common in adult basic skills education. The adults who enroll are busy with other life responsibilities, usually have limited time to give to education, and may be erratic in attendance. For these

some combination of the activities de- ers, you may want to find out more scribed above is the only workable way about one of the structured programs to manage their classes. Beder and Medina (2001) found in most of the adult literacy classrooms they observed "little evidence of teachers systematically assessing learners' needs or keep up with the needs of a growing evaluating whether instruction met individual or group needs." They also concluded that continuous enrollment and mixed skill levels are very serious problems for adult educators.

Some states are beginning to move away from the multi-level class format and are recommending that programs provide classes designated for specific ability levels. In some urban areas with many classes at various sites, this kind of programming already exists.

However, even if the setting allows for individualized instruction, teachers usually have limited information about learners' needs. Armed with a couple of TABE test scores, they are expected to know just what each adult needs and how to go about providing it. It's not surprising that little explicit reading instruction is going on.

But now we have access to research (discussed later in this chapter) that tells us that adult learners have widely varying needs, and that we can administer specific assessments to create meaningful learner profiles. We also know now that if we work on those aspects or components of reading that are identified as needs, we might really make a difference for adult learners.

Of course, the realities of your situation are still with you! You will be challenged to find ways to use what we know to meet the reading needs of adults with varying skills and abilities. To some extent, meeting learners' needs is a matter of classroom management: planning simultaneous smallgroup activities, for example. But you may also need training to build your skills and awareness of options in instructional strategies. In particular, if

reasons, teachers often have found that you are working with beginning readthat have proven successful with children and adults who have reading dis-

> Or you may be "running hard" to number of immigrants, many of whom need to learn to speak as well as read and write English. If your class includes these students along with native speakers of English, you are challenged indeed! As a first step, you may need special training to build awareness of cultural differences, so you can work effectively with these learners.

> You may need other kinds of resources as well: more class offerings, more flexible space, teaching assistants, tutors, computers, etc. Even if you don't see a way to make these changes soon, knowing what needs to be done is the first step. The information on research-based instruction and assessment options and the instructional planning examples in Chapters 8 and 9 may help you to think creatively about what you can do with existing resources. In some cases, you may (at least) identify a target to aim for, so you can advocate for the kind of program services that adult learners need.

> In summary, you can begin with some concrete steps to help adult learners improve their reading skills:

- Use assessments to identify the range of reading needs in your class.
- Use research-based instructional strategies to address those needs.
- Plan ways to get additional training and support.

What Can We Learn From the **Reading Research?**

Research can tell us something about reading instruction that has worked for adult learners, and knowing what works best is important because

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The Technology Corner

Need A New Years Resolution?

This article was submitted by Jana Groner, Professional Development Specialist.

Are the holidays bogging you down, and the snow days making you dread wanting to attend an in-service to earn professional development credit? Well here is the solution, attend a Horizon Wimba in-service!

Horizon Live is the personalized online training center used for the online in-services and occasional meetings with others on a statewide basis. You will need to complete a set up process to make a computer usable for Horizon Live. This can be done one of two ways; one option is an individual's computer, or the second option is setting up an entire program's computer lab. You should try logging on a day or two before the in-service to be sure that everything is working properly so that you will have time to ask for help from either your IT person or ours.

As an instructor I consider personal interaction to be the most valuable element of the teaching and learning process. Live Classroom allows faculty and students to build relationships by combining state-of-the-art interactive technologies such as voice, video, application sharing, polling, and whiteboarding, with traditional best practices of instruction. Now, enjoy the best elements of face-to-face and online instruction as faculty and students can talk to each other, express emotion, and feel as if they're part of a single community.

Lots of teachers have tried an on-line in-service but there are still a lot more teachers are pondering the idea. For those of you that need more information on Horizon Wimba, keep reading.

Create Community

Create a sense of community among students and instructors who might not otherwise interact with one another.

Offer Anytime Access

Offer live classes, and group discussions at times that are convenient for instructors and students, not just when the physical facilities are available.

Ensure Comprehension

Ensure your students understand their lessons by asking for immediate feedback, answering questions, and giving indepth verbal explanations of complex material .in-service

Appeal to Different Learning Styles

Enable students to meet their developmental objectives by appealing to different learning styles, as many students are auditory and visual learners.

Have Fun

Have fun: The best instructors and most memorable lectures invariably mix elements of education and entertainment? seeing, talking, laughing, and joking are all parts of the education process.

Multi-way audio (VoIP) and Streaming video

Create lively, personal instruction and conversation with real-time voice and video, as instructors and students communicate just as if they were in a face-to-face class. Live Classroom offers a telephone dial-in feature that allows users to participate when traveling, and even acts as a back-up if network problems occur.

Public & private text chat

Some students are more comfortable writing than speaking and our chat messaging allows the shy student to communicate textually so they can participate with their more talkative classmates.

Electronic whiteboard and polls, quizzes, and surveys

A best practice of live instruction is to regularly offer interactive exercises. By offering whiteboard exercises and asking polling questions, your students will remain highly engaged.

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Application sharing

Create collaborative exercises or teach complicated software applications just as if your students were seated right next to you. Application sharing allows you to work on any application, as everyone logged-in will follow every action your cursor makes. You can even pass control so students can collaborate right along with you.

Technology appropriate for Online Education

Student hardware, software, networks, and IT skills vary enormously. In order to accommodate as many students as possible, we specifically develop Live Classroom to effectively operate in the most challenging user environments. Our thin-client, low-bandwidth features allow for dial-up access, and our cross-platform support and intuitive user interface allow for virtually any user, on a PC, Mac, or Linux machine, to fully participate with minimal instruction and setup.

Accessible to people with disabilities

Just because a student has a disability doesn't mean they shouldn't be able to attend your live, online class. Live and archived classes can be closed-captioning for the hearing impaired while also reaching out to the visually impaired by offering numerous keyboard shortcut keys, hot keys, and compatibility with most screen readers. These accessibility features help institutions meet many state and federal accessibility guidelines.

Try something new for 2007; try a Horizon Wimba On-Line in-service.

*the list of benefits was directly taken from the Horizon Wimba website. http://208.185.32.93/

Workshop	Date	Location	Times
PCW Jefferson City	January 6-7, 2007 **Re- scheduled from Decem- ber 1-2.	Truman Hotel & Conference Center (Formerly the Ramada Inn) 1510 Jefferson Drive Jefferson City	Day 1: 8:30-5:30 Day 2: 8:30-12:30
PCW Jefferson City	January 20- 21	Truman Hotel & Conference Center (Formerly the Ramada Inn) 1510 Jefferson Drive Jefferson City	Day 1: 8:30-5:30 Day 2: 8:30-12:30
PCW Jefferson City	February 10- 11	Truman Hotel & Conference Center (Formerly the Ramada Inn) 1510 Jefferson Drive Jefferson City	Day 1: 8:30-5:30 Day 2: 8:30-12:30
PCW Jefferson City	May 5-6	Truman Hotel & Conference Center (Formerly the Ramada Inn) 1510 Jefferson Drive Jefferson City	Day 1: 8:30-5:30 Day 2: 8:30-12:30

BEGINNING TEACHER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WORKSHOPS (BTAP) These workshops will have a General Session and an AEL and ESL Breakout Session. Workshop Date Location Times BTAP Jefferson City (Formerly the Ramada Inn) 1510 Jefferson Drive Jefferson City

SHOW-ME LITERACY

Reading, (cont. from page 2)

adult learners have no time to waste. We have a responsibility to help them become better readers and reach their educational goals as efficiently as possible.

by reading professional journals may be confused and put off by the quantity of "new" programs and priorities. Research offers standards for evaluating this flood of information—new ideas. competing claims, and commercial products—that educators are exposed improving reading comprehension. to every day.

What are those standards? In their book, Using Research and Reason in Education (2003), Stanovich and Stanovich list the following criteria for evaluating claims:

- "the publication of findings in refereed journals (scientific publications that employ a process of peer review),
- the duplication of the results by other investigators,
- a consensus within a particular research community on whether there is a critical mass of studies that point toward a particular conclusion (p. 6)."

Published findings

The authors explain that the requirement that a study be published in a refereed journal is a minimal standard. could influence the outcome, the re-At the very least, a research study should have undergone the scrutiny of journal reviewers, who are themselves researchers in the same (or an allied) field of study.

Experimental research related to

1 Experimental research is just one kind of research, but it is what we look for to establish that educational practices are effective.

educational practice can determine practice. that: if a teacher does A, the learning result is B. In order for that conclusion to be valid, the study must employ the **Replicated research** logic of the experimental method, which enables the research to rule out other possible causes for the result.

Teachers who try to keep up to date ines student learning after a teacher implements a new reading program, the researcher must control for other factors that might contribute to learning. Journal reviewers evaluating the claim demand evidence that the reading program should get the credit for

> They want to know that the student group receiving the new reading program and the other group that didn't use the new program are similar—that the experimental group didn't have characteristics that gave them an advantage. For example, reviewers want to be sure the experimental group didn't have better reading skills at the beginning of the study. They need to know that the researcher tried to ensure that the two groups were similar with regard to skills and other characteristics that might affect the learning outcome (age, prior learning, life experience, English language proficiency, ies. etc.). They also want to be sure the students in both groups spent the same amount of time studying and the teacher in the experimental class didn't provide supplemental instruction.

By controlling for such factors that searcher is able to state with some confidence that the new reading program caused the learning gain. (See Appendix A for details on research methods.)

Journal reviewers should look critically at such claims to be sure they are logically justified. If a study has not been exposed to-or has not survived—this sort of scrutiny, we should be wary of accepting any claims based upon it. But even that isn't enough. No single study carries enough weight to support a claim about an instructional

The findings of a scientific experiment or educational study must be presented to the scientific community so For example, in a study that exam- other researchers can try it for themselves. If they repeat the experiment or educational intervention and have the same outcome, the finding has been replicated. Other researchers may try the intervention with different learner groups or in different program settings to see whether, or to what extent, the findings may be generalized. This kind of information is vital for practitioners who need to know how and when to apply research-based principles and practices.

Converging evidence

We can have great confidence in the validity of a claim if many studies point to the same conclusion. A review or synthesis of a body of research presents this converging evidence and makes research knowledge accessible to educators who cannot be expected to read and digest all of the original stud-

Evidence from a large number of related studies may be combined using a statistical technique called metaanalysis. Meta-analysis is one way to resolve disputes about studies with conflicting results and so may be a good resource for educators looking for answers. According to Stanovich and Stanovich (2003),

> The method is useful for ending disputes that seem to be nothing more than a 'he-said, she-said' debate. An emphasis on meta-analysis has often revealed that we actually have more stable and useful findings

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than is apparent from a perusal of the conflicts in our *journals* (p. 18).

This is exactly what has happened times a month. recently in the field of reading, where reading research for young children Council and reported in 1998 in a book titled Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, Eds.). The National Reading Panel did a meta-analysis of the reading research for preschool through grade twelve, which is dis-National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read (NICHD, 2000). And more recently, the National Institute for Literacy published a review of the adult reading research titled Research- Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction (Kruidenier, 2002). This review, done by the Reading Research Working Group convened by the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, also draws inferences from the first two reports in areas where there are gaps in the adult reading research. The next section is an overview of what these research reviews have to say about teaching reading.

Classroom applications and professional wisdom

Scientific research hasn't yet been conducted on many instructional questions that arise in adult education classrooms. The available research doesn't identify the best textbooks or . Decoding computer-assisted instructional programs. It doesn't establish proven strategies for working with multi- Vocabulary level adult learner groups or tell you • Comprehension how to manage your limited instruct-

ional time. This book can't offer triedand-true recipes for addressing every hurdle that adult learners face or for providing structured, sequential instruction for a working parent who can't make it to class more than a few

Yet when a topic lacks a research debate about instructional approaches base or hasn't been evaluated accordhas a long history. A synthesis of the ing to principles of scientific evaluation, it is still important to look at the was done by the National Research findings and principles from the established research base to look for clues on how to best approach an instructional challenge. The lack of scientific evidence for the efficacy or effectiveness of a particular approach doesn't mean it's impossible to decide what to do. By consulting the research base, cussed in the volume Report of the you may or may not find that the approach in question has a link to existing research. If it does, you may reasonably decide to use it. If not, you should consider an alternative.

> Making good decisions about applying research findings also means understanding individual learners, groups, and classroom settings so your instruction acknowledges their particular characteristics. The judgment that you've acquired through experience also enters the decision-making process. Together, these forms of knowledge may be called professional wisdom, which allows educators to adapt to local circumstances and operate intelligently in the many areas in which research evidence is absent or incomplete.

What Are the Components of Reading?

Research has identified five components of reading:

- Phonemic awareness
- Fluency

Each of the first four components plays an important role in facilitating comprehension, which is, of course, what reading is all about.

What Are the Components of **Reading Instruction?**

Paralleling the reading components are the instructional components:

- Phonemic awareness training
- Phonics instruction
- Fluency development
- Vocabulary development
- Comprehension-strategies instruction

How Do the **Components** Work Together?

Comprehension is the goal of reading instruction. All of the reading components contribute to the development of comprehension.

Alphabetics: phonemic awareness training and phonics instruction

The foundation for reading is the ability to identify words in print. Word identification skills are often called alphabetics. The term alphabetics refers to phonemic awareness, decoding, and sight-word recognition.

- Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to detect individual speech sounds within words. Phonemic awareness is required for developing accurate decoding skills. Some struggling readers have not acquired this ability, so phonemic awareness may need to be directly taught. (See Chapter 4 for details.)
- *Decoding*. Decoding is a word identification skill that involves using lettersound correspondences to recognize words in print. Decoding at higher skill levels also includes using larger word parts—like syllables, prefixes, and suffixes. Adults with weak decoding skills need explicit and systematic phonics instruction. (See Chapter 4.)

Sight words are those a reader recognizes automatically and reads

rapidly. Some frequently encountered Comprehension-strategies instruction words, especially those that have phonetically irregular spellings, are initially taught to be recognized on sight, to enhance reading speed and fluency. But even if a reader initially identifies a word by decoding, after many exposures the word is stored in memory and can be quickly recognized. In this way all words eventually become Even accurate, fluent reading does "sight words."

The alphabetics skills of phonemic awareness and decoding are necessary but not sufficient for reading comprehension.

Fluency development

Fluency is vital to comprehension. A fluent reader identifies words rapidly and accurately with little effort, and is therefore able to focus on meaning. A fluent reader also "interprets" while reading to determine appropriate phrasing and expression. This aspect of fluency indicates comprehension of the writer's message. Guided repeated oral reading is a recommended strategy for building fluency in beginning and developing readers. (See Chapter 5 for details.)

Alphabetics skills are required to develop fluency. Fluency is necessary but not sufficient to ensure reading comprehension.

Vocabulary development

knowledge of words they already comprehension is not a factor." know. Vocabulary instruction should involve direct teaching and contextbased approaches. (See Chapter 6 for Print-based details.)

Vocabulary is vital to reading comprehension at all levels.

Comprehension strategies enable learners to monitor their own understanding as they read and to solve comprehension problems. Teachers provide direct instruction in monitoring and repair strategies. (See Chapter 7 for details.)

not guarantee comprehension. Specific comprehension strategies may need to be taught.

Teaching the component skills

These components should not be seen as sequential. Students don't learn the alphabetics skills and then become fluent and then develop vocabulary and then focus on comprehension. Although the foundational alphabetics skills are a primary focus of beginning instruction, in fact, all the components reinforce each other, and as a result,

often develop simultaneously. Teachers should address all the necessary components (at appropriate levels of difficulty) in reading lessons Kruidenier, 2002).

In addition, the skills should be taught and practiced not only with drills and workbook exercises, but also with meaningful, authentic (real-life) materials, including texts in content areas like science, social studies, literature, and materials related to work and Vocabulary is important to reading home life. The National Institute for comprehension in two ways. The be- Literacy's website, Assessment Strateginning reader uses decoding skills to gies and Reading Profiles "translate" print into words that are (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/), already in his oral vocabulary. At clearly makes this point: "Reading is a higher reading levels, vocabulary combination of many sub-skills comknowledge is critical for understand- bined to achieve the common goal of ing increasingly difficult materials, comprehension. Teaching reading sub-Learners not only need to learn new skills in an authentic setting ensures words; they need to deepen their that there is never a moment when

and Meaningbased Skills

Another way to understand the components is to group them into two

categories:

- Print skills—phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency
- Meaning skills—vocabulary and comprehension

Print skills have to do with reading words accurately and rapidly. When use of these skills is comfortable and automatic, the reader can attend to the meaning of the text, which is the focus of vocabulary and comprehensionstrategy instruction. This distinction is not only a helpful simplifier; it also reflects common patterns observed in groups of adult learners.

For instance, reading researchers suggest that adults whose meaning skills are significantly stronger than their print skills present a profile associated with reading disability (Chall, 1994, as cited in Kruidenier, 2002). We now know that most reading disabilities are related to word reading. You may suspect a disability when an adult struggles with print skills—isolated word identification, phonemic awareness, and decodingbut has an adequate oral vocabulary and is capable of understanding text

when it is read to her.

English language learners present the opposite profile. They often exhibit stronger word identification abilities and fluency, with relative weakness in the meaning-based components. What holds them back is more likely a limited English vocabulary, not a reading disability. These two types of learners may have fairly similar scores on a silent reading comprehension test and even on a test of word recognition, yet have very different strengths and needs (Davidson & Strucker, 2002).

One lesson to be taken from these patterns is that you need to be able to assess adult learners' abilities in the component skills. A silent reading test alone often will not suffice. You have

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an opportunity to uncover problems that may never before have been needs, you will not be able to offer a real second chance at learning.

As you can see, research offers important insights about adult readers. It also provides guidance (or at least suggestions) for practice. As we get to specifics about assessment and instruction in the next chapters, you will see frequent references to adult next section introduces this research and includes a complete list of the principles.

What Does the Adult Education Research Say?

The resource of first resort for adult educators is Research-Based $\underline{www.cal.org/caela}$. Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction (Kruidenier, 2002), a report of the research review Institute for Literacy web site. done by the Reading Research Working Group (RRWG). Conclusions and suggestions presented in the report are from a fairly small body of experimental and non-experimental research in adult education, about 70 qualifying studies. A series of "emerging principles" described in the report are based on results from at least two experimental studies and any number of nonstudies. Findings experimental based on fewer studies are labeled "trends."

Because very little experimental research on adult reading instruction has been done, the findings are carefully phrased. Note the frequent use of the word may, which indicates that further research is

Relevant findings from the K-12 research are also included in the report as "ideas." The experimental research on children offers a much larger body of evidence, so where the adult reidentified and addressed. Unless you search proved to be limited, the PCW find out exactly what each learner RRWG looked to the data on children. Of course, we can't be sure that these PCW principles apply to adults, but until we have more adult education research, it seems reasonable to make use of this evidence in situations where adult learners and the children in the re- PCW search have similar characteristics.

You should also be aware that most of the adult research was done with education research principles. The native speakers of English. Unless ESOL adults are specifically mentioned, the principles listed on previous page may not apply to t them. For additional information on research specific to English language learners, you might consult The Center for Adult English Language Acquisition

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Upcoming PDC Schedule

January 6-7(Make up) January 20-21, 2007 February 10-11, 2007 **PCW** March 24-25, 2007 May 5-6, 2007

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December PCW Re-scheduled Due to Snow and Ice Storm

The PCW originally scheduled for December 1 & 2 has been re-scheduled for January 6&7 in Jefferson City. The workshop was canceled due to bad road conditions across the state.

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